

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the following remarks and amendments are respectfully requested. Claims 36-40, 42-44, 48-55, 57, and 59-67 are pending in the application, with Claims 49-55, 57, and 59-67 allowed. Claim 36 has been amended to more clearly recite the present invention and to directly addresses the basis for rejection without requiring any additional search. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that the present amendment be entered.

Claims 36-40, 43, 44, and 48 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sauer '300 in view of Ahr '069. Claim 42 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sauer '300 in view of Ahr '069 and Chen '865. Regarding Claim 36, the Examiner asserts that Sauer '300 discloses all aspects of the claimed invention with the exception of the additional strip of material having openings formed therethrough, and that Ahr '069 discloses a liquid distribution layer having a plurality of funnel-shaped openings that are spaced apart to form a central area that is devoid of openings.

The Applicants respectfully submit that the cited combination does not disclose each and every element of Claim 36 as currently amended. The Applicants have amended Claim 36 to more clearly define the central area that is devoid of openings to patentably define the claimed invention over the teachings of Sauer '300 in view of Ahr '069. As amended, Claim 36 now recites that the openings in the additional strip of material are formed "exclusively in one or both of the front area and the rear area of the absorbent article such that said formed openings are spaced from each other by the central area of the absorbent article which is devoid of such formed openings."

Neither Sauer '300 nor Ahr '069 disclose an additional strip of material having a central area devoid of openings as recited in Claim 36. For at least this reason, Claim 36 patentably defines over the cited combination. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claim 36, and all claims dependent therefrom, be withdrawn.

For at least the reasons discussed above, the Applicants respectfully submit that the claims patentably define over the cited references. As such, it is believed that the present application is in complete condition for allowance and favorable action, therefore, is respectfully requested. Should any issues remain after consideration of this amendment, then Examiner Anderson is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned at her convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

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